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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

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| In re Application of | : | |
| Donald K. Wright, et al. | : | |
| Application No. 10/039,527 | : | DECISION ON PETITION |
| Filed: November 7, 2001 | : | UNDER 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) |
| Attorney Docket No. 21276.01.9053 | : | |

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3), filed September 24, 2004, to accept an unintentionally delayed claim under 35 U.S.C. § 120 for the benefit of priority to the prior-filed nonprovisional applications set forth in the amendment filed concurrently with the instant petition.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

A petition for acceptance of a claim for late priority under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) is only applicable to those applications filed on or after November 29, 2000. Further, the petition is appropriate only after the expiration of the period specified in 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii). In addition, the petition under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(3) must be accompanied by:

- (1) the reference required by 35 U.S.C. § 120 and 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(i) of the prior-filed application, unless previously submitted;
- (2) the surcharge set forth in § 1.17(t); and
- (3) a statement that the entire delay between the date the claim was due under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(ii) and the date the claim was filed was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional.

The instant petition does not comply with item (1) above.

37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(i) requires that any nonprovisional application claiming the benefit of one or more prior-filed copending nonprovisional applications must contain or be amended to contain a reference to each such prior-filed application, identifying it by application number (consisting of the series code and serial number) and indicating the relationship of the applications. The

divisional, or continuation-in-part of a prior-filed nonprovisional application. An example of a proper benefit claim is: "This application is a continuation of Application No. 10/---, filed---." A benefit claim that merely states: "This application claims the benefit of Application No. 10/---, filed---," does not comply with 37 CFR 1.72(a)(2)(i) since the proper relationship, which includes the type of continuing application, is not stated. Also, the status of each nonprovisional parent application (if it is patented or abandoned) should also be indicated, following the filing date of the parent nonprovisional application. See Manual of Patent Examining Procedure, 8th ed., August 2001), Section 201.11, Reference to First Application.

The amendment submitted with the instant petition is unacceptable as drafted and, therefore, is not considered a proper reference under 37 CFR 1.78(a)(2)(i). In this regard, the amendment is physically part of the instant petition and, as such, does not comply with 37 CFR 1.121, 1.52, or 1.4(c). Note that 37 CFR 1.121 states that amendments are made by filing a paper, in compliance with § 1.52, directing that specified amendments be made. The pertinent section of 37 CFR 1.52 states that the claim (in this case, the claim for priority), must commence on a separate physical sheet. 37 CFR 1.4(c) states that each distinct subject must be contained in a separate paper since different matters may be considered by different branches of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

Further, the amendment is not acceptable as drafted since it improperly incorporates by reference the prior-filed applications. Petitioner's attention is directed to Dart Industries v. Banner, 636 F.2d 684, 207 USPQ 273 (C.A.D.C. 1980), where the court drew a distinction between a permissible 35 U.S.C. § 120 statement and the impermissible introduction of new matter by way of incorporation by reference in a 35 U.S.C. § 120 statement. The court specifically stated:

Section 120 merely provides a mechanism whereby an application becomes entitled to benefit of the filing date of an earlier application disclosing the same subject matter. Common subject matter must be disclosed, in both applications, either specifically or by an express incorporation-by-reference of prior disclosed subject matter. Nothing in section 120 itself operates to carry forward any disclosure from an earlier application. In re deSeversky, *supra* at 674, 177 USPQ at 146-147. Section 120 contains no magical disclosure-augmenting powers able to pierce new matter barriers. It cannot, therefore, "limit" the absolute and express prohibition against new matter contained in section 251.

In order for the incorporation by reference statement to be effective as a proper safeguard against the omission of a portion of a prior application, the incorporation by reference statement must be included in the specification-as-filed, or in an amendment specifically referred to in an oath or declaration executing the application. See In re deSeversky, *supra*. Note also MPEP 201.06(c).

Accordingly, before the petition under 37 CFR §§ 1.78(a)(3) can be granted, a renewed petition under 37 CFR §§ 1.78(a)(3) and a substitute amendment¹ deleting the incorporation by reference statement and stating the relationship of the prior-filed application to the instant application are required.

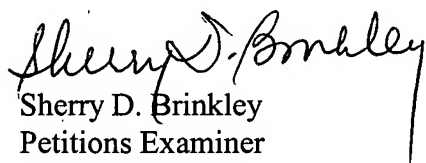
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¹ Note 37 CFR 1.121